



Fellows Update

Web Resources

Home Page <<http://nces.ed.gov>>

- Find all major NCES site destinations ranging across elementary/secondary/postsecondary, libraries, and international programs here, including "What's New," "Encyclopedia of ED Stats," "Education Fast Facts," and Quick Links" to most of our popular pages.
- Plus, each day you will find a new education fact in the "Did You Know?" section, and our informative "Inside the Stats" graphs are updated weekly. You can also sign up for "News Flash" to receive e-mail alerts about late-breaking NCES news.

Special Features

Throughout the NCES web site you will find many special pages and tools to help you find the education data that is right for you. Examples include:

- The Student Classroom is for our school-age visitors and includes a "Find Your School" feature: quizzes, games, an easy-to-use graphing function, and more; and
- The College Opportunities Online (COOL) page is an extensive database of up-to-date information on over 9,000 U.S. colleges and universities.

News from the Field

An Interview with NCES Fellow Phillip Wedlake

SPRING 2002 NCES Fellow Phillip Wedlake got a shorter commute to work right after the program in Washington, DC, as well as a brand new job and title: supervisor of assessment and projects in California's Ceres District. He now can look every day at the NCES website, he says, and appreciate NCES's "awesome effort," from the simple graph maker to the newly posted 2002 Conditions of Education.

Assessment formerly was just part of his job, Wedlake says, but now he devotes all his time to testing. California's State-mandated assessments include norm-referenced testing, contents-referenced testing, high school exit exams, bilingual-proficiency testing, and multiple measures testing under Title I. California has year-round education, so the testing season, he says, starts in March and continues throughout the year.

California also develops its own standard content tests. This year, for example, California's own



achievement tests are being used, instead of the Stanford tests used for the last 5 years. This means, Wedlake says, that correlations between the California State Testing and Research (STAR) System data and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data and other NCES data are difficult. Other hurdles are the size of the California system (1,000 districts), the lack (as yet) of a uniform data system, and the high transient rate. He is continuing to work on gaining a better understanding of how these data may be compared and contrasted so that he can

An Interview with NCES Fellow Regina Oliver

"I HAVE a much better sense of where to go to look for what, and I'm much more efficient," says Regina Oliver, in talking about the results of her experience in the Spring 2002 NCES Fellows Program. Oliver is an information specialist for the Pathways to College Network Clearinghouse. The recently launched network is made up of 16 collaborating organizations, located at the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE), and hosted by the research-oriented Pell Institute. The network's purpose is to improve educational access and success of underserved youth, such as low-income and first-generation students. The network's clearinghouse is focused on research: it provides reference services, works with other components of the network to disseminate their research, and runs workshops at regional and national conferences. Oliver is involved in each of these activities as well as in managing the clearinghouse website (pathwaystocollege.net/clearinghouse), editing its bimonthly newsletter, and developing factsheets and FAQs.

As the only reference librarian for the Pathways to College Network Clearinghouse, Oliver has as a primary responsibility helping researchers and others find the

information they need. The NCES Fellows program, Oliver says, helped her feel more confident in directing researchers and grant proposal writers to specific locations in the NCES database to find the data they need. She is now also better able to help researchers formulate their questions with greater specificity, to help them focus, for example, on specific year data, regional or national data, 2- or 4-year postsecondary data.



In the clearinghouse's recent move from space within the COE to space within the Pell Institute, Oliver says, space became available for a library. This is now set up, complete with an NCES section that includes hard copies of all

bulletins as well as other materials. She is currently doing the cataloging and pleased to have one more way to get information to people.

Since her experiences at the NCES Fellows Program, Oliver has been enthusiastically publicizing NCES resources. In June, she described NCES data resources to the COE's Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, and walked attendees through the postsecondary resources most relevant to their needs for information on undergraduates who might consider acquiring teaching doctoral degrees, and on where to focus recruiting efforts for their program. At the Second Annual GEAR UP National Conference in July, Oliver talked about NCES resources, the Fellows program, and how to sign up for the NCES Subscription Service in conjunction with talking about the Pathways to College Network Clearinghouse. At the COE's 21st Annual Conference in September, Oliver will be part of a panel on the Pathways to College Network, and plans to include NCES resources in talking about the resources of the network clearinghouse. Then, early next year, Oliver will be continuing to spread the word on the value of NCES data tools and digital resources in the brown bag series organized for Pathways to College Network staff.



Tai Phan, NCES Mentor and Presenter



left to right: Fellow Regina Oliver, Council for Opportunity in Education, Washington, DC (center) NCES Mentor, Barbara Holton and Fellow Shirlene Gordon, Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, NM.



Mary McCrory, NCES Manager



Martha Haynes leads her group in a segment of the meeting "what's working and what's not working."



Sindy McGill, NCES Technical Specialist, prepares for a PowerPoint demonstration.



Fellows show off their t-shirts from the annual t-shirt exchange.



Fellow Elizabeth Glennie, North Carolina Education Research Data Center, Duke University



Picture Wall: fellows exchange affirmations and kinds words of expression during their weekly visit.

An Interview with NCES Fellow Curtis J. Taylor

OVERSEERING a comprehensive strategic planning initiative is the current major task of Spring 2002 NCES Fellow Curtis Taylor. Last year it was coordinating a North Central Association accreditation self-study and team visit. He is assistant to the president and director of institutional planning for Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa. Of the town's population of 6,000, 25 percent are Dordt students. The college, one of 31 similar independent institutions in the State, has 2- and 4-year programs as well as a masters program and is just now adding a 2-year computer networking degree.

Providing data for the strategic planning initiative group—which must scan the environment and prioritize academic programs while evaluating the college's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats—is one of Taylor's responsibilities. Useful NCES data resources, he says, include ranked or raw data pulled from the IPEDS Peer Analysis System for comparisons to assist in uncovering student cross-applications to institutions similar to Dordt. Taylor wishes there were comparable data for the 13 percent of Dordt students traditionally coming from Canada.

Taylor has shared his increased understanding of NCES resources, of the kinds of data that are available, with Dordt's president and administrative cabinet. His increased understanding of NCES resources is also useful, Taylor says, in his work to help set up Dordt's new database system, which should make it easier to complete the IPEDS reports for the



college, as well as in his work as a member of the board of a local independent elementary and middle school. Taylor says that the school's principal is excited over what's available in, for example, the NCES updates, reports, and Common Core of Data—particularly because next year the school will undergo accreditation.

Among future plans to share his understanding of NCES resources are a workshop at the Christian Schools International Conference, to be held on campus in October. The workshop will be in a hands-on environment to show participating teachers and administrators what's available. For next year's summer graduate program in research and design at Dordt, he plans to confer with the program's planner. Taylor says he is also thinking about how to share with other members of the National Association of Presidential Assistants in Higher Education, which meets each year 2 or 3 days before the American Council on Education conference. Closer to home, he says, are possibilities at State and regional conferences.

As he keeps on working on his doctoral dissertation, Taylor says, he will keep on exploring NCES resources. His topic focuses on characteristics and values of faculty members at several institutions across the United States, and he expects that the National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF:99) will continue to be especially useful—as was being able to talk to NCES staff during the Fellows program.

An Interview with NCES Fellow Martha Haynes

SPRING 2002 NCES Fellow Martha Haynes is senior educational program director in education information and accountability services with the Florida Department of Education. This involves maintaining the State's public education pre-K through 12 student and staff databases, responding to data requests, and helping researchers who contact her for assistance. Haynes says that thanks to the Fellows program she now not only uses the NCES website far more extensively but also saves programmer time. For example, she was able to go straight to the CCD data—and no programmer time was needed—when a researcher recently asked her for 5 years of diplomas by district. She says she is also better able to help researchers formulate their queries and find sources for reliable longitudinal data.

After her return from the program, Haynes says, she devoted one of her weekly meetings with staff to demonstrating the rich resources available on the NCES website. She has also made sure they know about new features announced on the site, such as Tai Phan's mapping tool. And she plans to have

another inservice meeting soon so that the eight staff members who assist her in responding to student and staff data requests will be up to date on the CCD query tool that debuted at the STATS DC 2002 conference in Washington in July.



Currently, Haynes says, she is working on a proposal for a State Cooperative System in Florida that would focus on data quality and in some respects parallel the Fellows program. In the past, the Florida Department of Education has gone to individual districts to address data quality issues, with four districts covered in 12 years. Haynes' proposed State Coopera-

tive System plans to reach 15 districts in 1 year by bringing staff from these districts to Tallahassee for a program in which they can both receive information on the issues and work together to identify and solve some of their mutual problems.

"A real value of the Fellows program," says Haynes, "is seeing how they do it in other States." This makes her certain that a real value of the proposed State Cooperative System will be district staff seeing how they do it in other districts. This also is the inspiration behind the listserv that Haynes has set up for the Spring 2002 Fellows, which enables them to continue to communicate about what they are doing, and to follow up on their many rewarding interactions with NCES staff.

An Interview with NCES Fellow Phillip Wedlake

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better understand how to make California students more successful.

Wedlake shared his new understanding of NCES resources at a board meeting of the Association of California Administrators, and he plans to in November with association membership. He is checking to make sure the association's website includes and continues to include the NCES website. Wedlake also says he used his new understanding of resources to show district school site personnel how to keep current in tracking the State's many

transient students by accessing the website linked to the California public school database, which is frequently updated, rather than by looking in the California data book, which is put out once a year.

Where he has most used what he learned at the Fellows program, Wedlake says, is with his students. In addition to supervising assessment and projects in the Ceres school district, he is an adjunct professor in research and evaluation at Chapman University. Throughout the year he teaches five classes of graduate students working toward a masters degree

in education through the university's extension service. His starting point for his recent weekly classes, he says, was directing the students to the NCES website, which is so "tremendous for information," and pointing out, for example, the consistency achieved through the NCES telephone survey process. Wedlake expects the students to use NCES resources for their term papers, and for independent research. He also expects that they will spread their own new understanding of NCES resources after completing his classes.



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